

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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R 151000Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1880

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 0214

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN, PK

SUBJECT: SUBCONTINENT SETTLEMENT: INDO-BENGALEE TALKS OF JAN 9-12

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 10708 B. ISLAMABAD 0457

SUMMARY: THE GOI AND THE BDG COMPLETED THREE DAYS OF TALKS JAF 12 IN DACCA. ACCORDING TO AN UNUSUALLY NONCOMMITTAL JOINT COMMUNIQUE, THE TWO DELEGATIONS REVIEWED THE SLOW PACE OF REPATRIATING NONLOCALS FROM BANGLADESH TO PAKISTAN AND CONFERRED ON WAYS TO PROCEED TOWARDS A MORE COMPLETE SUBCONTINENT SETTLEMENT. ON THIS AND OTHER ISSUES OF PURELY BILATERAL INTEREST, LITTLE AGREEMENT WAS REACHED. THE BDG ONLY AUTHORIZED THE GOI TO DISCUSS WITH PAKISTAN IMPROVED REPATRIATION PROCEDURES. OUTSTANDING ISSUES WERE DEFERRED UNTIL SWARAN SINGH VISITS DACCA AND MUJIB NEW DELHI. END SUMMARY.

1. GOI-BDG DISCUSSIONS: KEWAL SINGH, THE INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY, MET WITH HIS BENGALEE OPPOSITE NUMBER FOR THREE DAYS OF TALKS WHICH ENDED JAN 12. IN ADDITION TO WORKING LEVEL DISCUSSIONS, KEWAL SINGH CALLED ON PRIME AND FOREIGN MINISTERS. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISCUSSIONS WAS LOW KEYED IN OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. THEY BILLED AS CONFIDENTIAL

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ROUTINE MEETINGS THE THIRD IN THE SERIES OF INDO-BANGLADESH CONSUL-

TATIONS FORESEEN IN THE 1972 TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION.

2. ACCORDING TO THE COMMUNIQUE AND A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE HELD JAN 12, REPATRIATION PROCEDURES WERE THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION. AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, PAKISTAN WAS CRITICIZED FOR DELAYING CLEARANCES OF NON-BENGALEE LOCALS WHO QUALIFY FOR REPATRIATION UNDER THE DELHI AGREEMENT. KEWAL SINGH NOTED THAT INDIA WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO INCREASE THE SPEED POW'S ARE RETURNED UNLESS PAKISTAN INCREASED THE PACE OF NONLOCAL CLEARANCES. HE VOICED PESSIMISM ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVED INDO-PAK RELATIONS, NOTING PAKISTAN HAD NOT RESPONDED FAVORABLY TO INDIAN PROPOSALS FOR TALKS ON THE RESUMPTION OF TRADE AND COMMUNICATIONS. HE ARGUED ADDITIONAL FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MAY BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE REPATRIATION PROCESS. ENAYET KARIM SEEMED SATISFIED WITH THE RATE OF BENGALEES RETURNING FROM PAKISTAN BUT IMPLIED THE GOP WAS DRAGGING ITS FEET ON THE RELEASE OF REMAINING MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVICE PERSONNEL, INCLUDING BENGALEES DETAINED IN PAKISTAN FOR POLITICAL OFFENSES. THE TWO DELEGATIONS ALSO DISCUSSED "DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SUBCONTINENT WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF BRINGING ABOUT A SPEEDY NORMALIZATION OF THE SITUATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DURABLE PEACE." THIS ASPECT OF THE TALKS INCLUDED THE WAR CRIMES TRIALS AND RECOGNITION BUT NEITHER FOREIGN SECRETARY CHOSE TO COMMENT ON WHAT WAS DISCUSSED. THEY DID AGREE THE GOI COULD RAISE WITH THE GOP SPEEDIER REPATRIATION PROCEDURES BUT BEYOND THAT THE GOI WAS GIVEN NO AUTHORITY PUBLICLY TO PLEAD BANGLADESH'S CASE.

3. BILATERAL CONCERNS WERE A SECONDARY FOCUS OF THE TALKS BUT NEITHER THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE NOR THE PRESS CONFERENCE SHED MUCH LIGHT ON THE ISSUES OR THE POINTS OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT. PRIOR TO AND DURING THE MEETING, THE BENGALEE PRESS, BASED ON "INFORMED SOURCES," SPECULATED SUCH CONTENTIOUS BILATERAL QUESTIONS AS THE FARAKKA BARRAGE, JUTE POLICY, FRONTIER CONTROL, AND THE TRADE IMBALANCE WOULD BE RAISED. THE FOREIGN SECRETARIES OBLIQUELY REFERRED TO TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND SMUGGLING BUT DID NOT DISCUSS DETAILS. BY ANNOUNCING MUJIB'S VISIT TO NEW DELHI AND SWARAN SINGH'S VISIT TO DACCA THEY LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT DECISIONS OF TRILATERAL AND BILATERAL QUESTIONS WOULD BE A POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY.

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4. THE INDIAN DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER J. N. DIXIT CALLED ON OUR CHARGE JAN 14 AND CONFIRMED THE FOREGOING. HE PREDICTED TRILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS OVER REPATRIATION WOULD CONTINUE TO BE DIFFICULT AND CITED TWO CONTENTIOUS ISSUES. THE INDIANS POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THEY SYMPATHIZED WITH BENGALEE COMPLAINTS OVER THE SLOWNESS OF GOP CLEARANCE PROCEDURES, THEY BELIEVED THE GOP WOULD HAVE REAL DIFFICULTY ACCEPTING AND SETTLING THE 400,000 NONLOCAL CANDIDATES SUBMITTED BY THE ICRC FOR REPATRIATION UNDER THE FIRST THREE CATEGORIES OF THE NEW DELHI AGREEMENT. THIS FIGURE FAR EXCEEDED WHAT THE GOP INFORMALLY UNDERSTOOD IN AUGUST 1973. (THE ICRC INFORMS US THAT WHILE IT HAS SUBMITTED JUST OVER 400,000 NAMES THERE ARE A GREAT MANY DOUBLE REGISTRATIONS.) SECOND, WHEN QUERIED ON HOW THE BDG INTENDED TO DEFINE THE HARDSHIP CATEGORY OF THE NEW DELHI AGREEMENT, THE BENGALEE DELEGATION DEMURRED AND SAID THE COMPOSITION OF THIS CATEGORY WOULD BE SOLELY A BDG RESPONSIBILITY. (THE ICRC INFORMS US IT IS REGISTERING NONLOCAL DETAINEES, POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL, AND THEIR FAMILIES. THE BDG HAS NOT YET GIVEN ITS APPROVAL AND THE ICRC DOES NOT YET HAVE FORMAL AGREEMENT FROM THE GOP).

5. DIXIT HADDED GOI COULD AND WISHED TO DOUBLE THE RATE OF POW TRANSFER TO PAKISTAN BUT AGREED TO OFFER THIS AS AN INDUCEMENT TO
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THE GOP TO SPEED CLEARANCES. TO THE BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE THE BDG HAS NOT YET IDENTIFIED THE 195 WAR CRIMINALS TO BE DETAINED IN INDIA. HE ADMITTED THERE MAY BE AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS. DIXIT CONFIRMED KEWAL SINGH'S STATEMENT THAT ADDITIONAL FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WILL BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE REPATRIATION; THE DONORS SHOULD ANTICIPATE AN APPEAL.

6. REFERRING TO PRESS REPORTS OF MUJIB'S MEETING WITH SHUKAT HAYAT KHAN AND THE GOP APPROACH TO UNSYG (REF A), SINGH ASKED KARIM FOR THE BDG POSITION ON PRIOR RECOGNITION. KARIM TOOK A HARD LINE SAYING THE BDG WOULD ACCEPT NOTHING LESS THAN DE JURE RECOGNITION PRIOR

TO ANY MEETING WITH GOP REPRESENTATIVES. SO NERVOUS WERE THE BENGALIS ON THIS POINT, THAT MENTION OF THE DESIRABILITY OF RECOGNITION AND UN MEMBERSHIP WAS STRICKEN FROM THE COMMUNIQUE. ACCORDING TO DIXIT THE GOI WILL NOT TRY TO INFLUENCE THE BENGALIS POSITION.

7. THE BILATERAL ISSUES OF FARAKKA, JUTE AND BORDER CONTROL RECEIVED ONLY CURSORY ATTENTION. THE DELEGATIONS AGREED THESE QUESTIONS WOULD BE DISCUSSED AT POLITICAL LEVELS. MUJIB DID HOWEVER ASK KEWAL SINGH TO INFORM MRS. GANDHI HE IS PREPARED PERSONALLY TO SETTLE THE FARAKKA ISSUE. DIXIT SAID SWARAN SINGH WOULD VISIT DACCA IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS BUT THAT MRS. GANDHI COULD NOT RECEIVE MUJIB UNTIL LATER THIS SPRING; SHE WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH STATE ELECTIONS.

8. COMMENT: THE EMPHASIS ACCORDED IN THE COMMUNIQUE AND THE PRESS CONFERENCE TO PAKISTAN'S FAILURE TO GRANT RAPID CLEARANCES IS MISLEADING. AS DIXIT POINTED OUT THERE ARE REAL REPATRIATION ISSUES WHICH MUST BE SETTLED BY THE THREE GOVERNMENTS. BOTH THE ICRC AND THE UNHCR FEEL REPATRIATION HAS GONE AS WELL AS COULD BE EXPECTED; MOREOVER ONLY IN THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS HAS ICRC MISSION DACCA TRANSMITTED THE REMAINING REPATRIATION APPLICATIONS. BENGALIS RIGIDITY ON THE FORM OF RECOGNITION IS DISTURBING, EVEN IF PREDICTABLE. HOWEVER, KARIM IS PROBABLY NOT TO BE PRIVY TO MUJIB'S THINKING ON THIS QUESTION.

9. THAT NO SIGNIFICANT CONSENSUS WAS REACHED BETWEEN THE TWO DELEGATIONS IS NOT SURPRISING. THE BENGALIS REGIME IS NERVOUS ABOUT BEING TRAPPED INTO ANOTHER INDIAN-SPONSORED SUBCONTINENT "PACKAGE SETTLEMENT". BILATERAL ISSUES ARE COMPLEX AND IN THE CASE OF FARAKKA BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAVE ALREADY AGREED THE SUBJECT CAN ONLY

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BE RESOLVED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE PRIME MINISTERS. BOTH SUBCONTINENT SETTLEMENT AND BILATERAL ISSUES ARE VITAL TO BANGLADESH AND THE SHEIKH'S WORD IS ESSENTIAL. HE IS NOT IN THE HABIT OF DELEGATING SUCH AUTHORITY TO HIS FOREIGN SECRETARY. THE TWO DELEGATIONS COULD AND DID LITTLE MORE THAN PREPARE THE GROUND FOR THEIR SENIORS. NEITHER SIDE EXPECTED MORE.
FULLER

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